

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 DRC-01 /111 W
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R 290924Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6454

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 10410

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, RP

SUBJECT: AQUINO DEVELOPMENTS

1. AQUINO'S NAME HAS BEEN FOCUS OF CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION PAST FEW WEEKS BEGINNING WITH TIME MAGAZINE ISSUE (BANNED HERE) THAT CALLED AQUINO ONE OF RISING LEADERS IN ASIA.

2. SHORTLY AFTER THIS MOMENTARY PROMINENCE, GOP AGREED TO LET AQUINO RETURN HOME TO BIRTHDAY OF ELDEST DAUGHTER. RETURN WOULD HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT FIRST FOR AQUINO WHO, UNLIKE DIOKNO, HAS NEVER BEEN ALLOWED HOME. ON DAY VISIT WAS TO HAVE OCCURRED, AND AFTER GOP TROOPS HAD CHECKED ARRANGEMENTS AND ELDERLY PARENTS HAD TREKKED THROUGH FLOODS TO AQUINO HOUSE, AQUINO DID NOT SHOW; MRS. AQUINO FINALLY GOT SOMEONE IN FORT BONIFACIO TO ADMIT THAT VISIT CANCELED AT LAST MINUTE. THERE IS SOME QUESTION NOW GOVERNMENT EVER INTENDED TO LET HIM GO HOME.

3. IN AUGUST 23 INTERVIEW WITH LEON DANIELS, UPI, PRESIDENT SAID HE EXPECTED SUPREME COURT TO ACT ON AQUINO-DIOKNO CASES IN FEW WEEKS. OUR COURT SOURCES INTIMATE TO US, HOWEVER, THAT NO DECISION IS EXPECTED SOON AT LEAST ON MILITARY TRIBUNAL PETITION OF AQUINO ALTHOUGH THERE COULD BE ACTION ON EARLIER HABEAS CORPUS PETITION.

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4. MOST RECENT EVENT IN AQUINO SAGA IS FACT THAT ARTHUR

ZICH, FORMER TIME REP HERE, NOW WITH NEWSWEEK, WAS BROUGHT OUT HERE BY GOP (ALL EXPENSES PAID) OSTENSIBLY FOR ARTICLE HE IS FREE-LANCING FOR HARPER'S. PRESIDENT GAVE INTERVIEW DURING WHICH, ACCORDING TO PLAYBACK VERSION BY AQUINO SISTER, PRESIDENT SAID DIOKNO AND AQUINO COULD BE FREE IF ONLY THEY WOULD SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO REPUBLIC OF PHILIPPINES. HE THEN ARRANGED FOR ZICH TO INTERVIEW DIOKNO AND AQUINO AT FORT BONIFACIO IN RESPONSE ZICH ARGUMENT THAT KATTENBERG AND OTHER ARTICLES REFLECTED SO BADLY ON PHILIPPINES. DESPITE SCOOP NATURE OF INTERVIEW, ZICH TALKED TO AQUINO ONLY ABOUT LIVING CONDITIONS, CONSTANTLY EXCLAIMING "MY, YOU LOOK SO WELL." UNCLEAR WHEN AND HOW THIS WILL BE USED BUT FACT INTERVIEW WAS HELD WILL PROBABLY LEAK OUT SHORTLY AND GOVERNMENT WILL NO DOUBT SEEK TO MAKE MOST OF IT.

5. COMMENT: WE DO NOT SEE ANY EVIDENCE ON GOVERNMENT'S PART OF INTENTION TO ACCELERATE CHARGING AND/OR TRYING OF DIOKNO AND AQUINO. SO FAR AS WE KNOW, HANDLING OF TWO REMAINS AWKWARD CONUNDRUM FOR GOVERNMENT WHICH IT WOULD RATHER NOT TRY TO SOLVE. INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION GIVEN TO POLITICAL PRISONERS IN KOREA IN RECENT WEEKS, HOWEVER, MAY HAVE ENCOURAGED GOVERNMENT TO CREATE IMPRESSION OF MOVEMENT. ZICH INTERVIEW DETAILING AQUINO'S FITNESS AND COMFORTABLE QUARTERS COULD BE USED TO ILLUSTRATE HUMANE NATURE OF GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL PRISONERS, TRIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: martinml
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MANILA10410
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740239-0623
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974088/aaaaagkv.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: martinml
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09-Aug-2002 by worrelsw>; APPROVED <12 MAR 2003 by martinml>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AQUINO DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PINS, RP, (AQUINO), (DIOKNO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005